The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

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I. THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld the Word's glory, glory as of the only Child from God."

— John 1:14 (*An Inclusive Language Lectionary*)

God expressed the fullness of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we worship as the Word made flesh. To be human is to live with God and the whole of creation in the fullness of freedom and the challenge of responsibility. The pattern of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection resonates unreservedly with God's call to perfect freedom and responsibility.

In baptism, God, speaking through the Church, claims us in Christ. We become, in Christ, the community of God's final purpose: justice and peace, love and plenty for the whole creation. This new community lives in Eucharistic fellowship with God and
Creation, as a sign and instrument of God's reconciling purpose in the world.

The Church is called to embody and advance God's mission. Ministry is the vocation of the whole community: laypersons, deacons, priests, and bishops who together represent Christ and the Church in the world.

The obligation to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being is binding for all the baptized. The authority with which ***leaders*** — ordained persons and adults who minister with minors ***(children*** and ***youth),*** and youth in leadership roles — are entrusted, creates an inherent power imbalance in the ***pastoral relationship***. This power imbalance derives from the leadership role and, in the case of clergy, the symbolic authority of an ordained person. Christian leadership is intended to provide occasions for guidance and grace, and its abuse is always and unequivocally wrong.

Ministry involves a necessary tension between a Gospel-based integrity and a Gospel-based intimacy as modeled by the life of Christ. A rigid adherence to a system of rules leads to an unproductive legalism. Yet, without the framework of the law, the intimate relationships into which Christ calls us risk distortion and harm. All the people of God are called to minister attentively within this tension. These policies are intended to provide a pattern for attentive practice of ministry.

This document is a statement for the Episcopal Church in Oklahoma, and reflects the standards and expectations as laid out by the Taskforce to Update Safe Church Training and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. These policies set forth expectations for leaders in their relationships with children and youth. The purpose of these policies is to foster the highest standards of behavior in ministry settings. The document includes:

- ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A), which explains the level of screening and training required before engaging in ministry with children and youth in Oklahoma;
- A description of requisite training that is specialized and tailored to ministry role and function in Oklahoma;
- Behavioral standards designed to ensure that children and youth and all who engage in ministry with them are treated with dignity and respect in all settings; and
- ***Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications*** (Appendix B).

II. EXPECTATIONS AND LOCAL IMPLIMENTATION

This policy sets forth statements of general expectations and guidelines of behavior for ordained and lay people in the church when engaged in ministry with children and youth. This policy is mandated by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, for all such activities sponsored by every congregation, institution, organization, school, and agency of each diocese. The purpose of these policies is to create safe and welcoming space for all children and youth in our communities and those engaged in ministry with children and youth and to prevent abuse or exploitation.

This policy reflects current best practices for creating such safe spaces. It is the expectation of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma that all congregations, institutions, organizations, schools, and agencies of the Diocese implement these policies. The Diocese of Oklahoma may allow for site-specific variations from this policy at schools and diocesan institutions (conference center, adult living centers, etc). Alternations must be consistent with best practices for their institution, organization, school, and/or agency. Such requests must be approved by the local governing body and shall be recorded in the minutes of the governing body. The site-specific variations must then be presented to the Bishop's Office for final approval. The Bishop's Office retains authority to accept or reject all site-specific variation requests. No provisions may be omitted from a local policy without the consent of the Office of the Bishop. Congregations may not adopt site-specific variations.

It is the responsibility of all governing bodies and leaders to understand these policies and all local requirements thoroughly enough to make appropriate judgments regarding implementation. Further it is the responsibility of all governing bodies and leaders to consult with the Office of the Bishop regarding any questions regarding the application or implementation of these policies, or if unanticipated situations arise.

No policy can foresee every possible circumstance to which it may be applied. Whenever applicable, questions of civil, criminal, and/or ecclesiastical discipline and employment offenses should be addressed with the relevant authorities immediately. Please contact the Office of the Bishop for consultation and resources..

For more information regarding Safe Church in the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma please visit www.epiok.org/safechurch.

III. DEFINITIONS

NOTE: These definitions reflect our understanding of terms describing gender identity and sexuality, which are evolving as these policies are being written.

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school *(see footnote to youth on page 6).*

Bullying: Behavior that intimidates, humiliates, offends, degrades, or harms another person, whether verbal, psychological, social, physical, or otherwise.

Child: Anyone under the age of 12 years *(see footnote to youth on page 6).*

Child Protective Services: A social services program provided by state and local governments serving children and their families who are in need of assistance. Child Protective Services receive and investigate reports of suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Gender Non-Binary: An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender ("genderqueer"). This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Intake Officer: The person(s) designated by each diocese to receive information regarding an offense for which a member of the clergy may be held accountable under *Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church,* which sets out the disciplinary process for clergy. Anyone may contact an Intake Officer to report concerns.

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. The "+" is an effort to include additional gender identities. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Mandated Reporter: A person who is required by state law to report reasonable suspicions of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of vulnerable populations to the appropriate state agency. State laws vary greatly. Generally, state law mandates that either all adults or adults in certain professions report suspected abuse of children and/or youth.

It is imperative to know the requirements of applicable state laws. Typically, individuals who are not mandated to report suspicion of abuse may make a report to the appropriate state agency, even though not legally required to do so.

Off-Site: Any location other than the sponsoring Episcopal Church, institution, facility, or campus.

Organizations: All institutions for which the diocese or congregations have legal or fiduciary responsibility (examples: diocesan departments, commissions, conference & retreat centers, adult day care centers, retirement communities, religious orders, congregations, schools, etc.).

Overnight: Any event that starts on one calendar day and ends on a different calendar day.

Pastoral Relationship: Any relationship (1) between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such Member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, or (2) between a lay minister and any person to whom the lay minister is offering prayer, ministry, and/or any person from whom the lay minister has received sensitive, personal, or confidential information in the course of offering ministry.

Programs: Official activities and programs sponsored by The Episcopal Church and its provinces, dioceses, and congregations (examples include: The Episcopal Youth Event, Provincial Youth Events, Happening, Teens Encounter Christ, pilgrimages, mission experiences, New Beginnings, camp programs, Acolyte Festival, etc.).

Public Records Check: A search of documents and data available to the public including criminal and civil court records, credit reports, and driving records from the department of motor vehicles. Typically, such searches are conduct by a third party with expertise in this area.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

Sacramental Use: Consecrated or unconsecrated wine used in the setting of Eucharist.

Sexual misconduct: A broad term encompassing any behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or capacity for consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

Title IV: A section of the *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church* pertaining to clergy professional standards, accountability and ecclesiastical discipline.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth. This is an evolving term, as our understanding and language around gender identity and sexuality expands and matures.

Training: Organized activity designed to provide information and/or instructions to strengthen and enhance the recipient's understanding, capacity, and exercise of ministry.

Youth: Anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, and still in high school.[1]

[1] Ages established in accordance with generally accepted definitions in the United States. These ages may vary across the wider Episcopal Church.

IV. APPLICATION AND SCREENING

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, congregations, and other organizations are required to screen all persons according to the standards in the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A). The level of screening is determined by the role, function, and duties associated with a given ministry position. For some positions, screening consists only of a Public Records Check. For other positions there are additional screening requirements of a written application, interview, and reference verification.

A. Public Records Checks

- Congregations and other organizations shall use a provider approved by the diocese to conduct public records checks. You may not use a provider that is not approved by the diocese. Contact the Diocesan Office for a current list of approved providers.
- Public record checks must be completed before the employee or volunteer begins interacting with children and youth. If the individual is an employee the public record check must be included with all new hire paperwork sent to the Diocesan Office;
- Criminal public records checks shall include all available criminal records and sex offender registries at the state and federal levels;
- A Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records check is required if transporting children and youth as part of, or an extension of, ministry of the church or for a church-sponsored event;
- A credit check is required for anyone with access to a bank account or who has check signing authority; and
- Public records checks must be updated at least every five years.
- If the individual has access to the property via key or key code, they must sign and submit a key holder agreement.

B. Additional Screening Requirements

Written application, interview, and reference verification are required before serving in certain roles and ministries as specified in the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A). Where required, these components are generally conducted in the following order:

- Submission of a completed written application to serve in a specified role with a clearly defined, written "job description." The application includes verifiable personal information;
- Personal interview;
- Reference verification conducted by congregations and other organizations to verify personal information and check references listed in the application (people who know but are not related to the applicant); and
- Maintenance of these records as described below.

In most cases all volunteers working with children and youth must be known and active in the congregation for at least six months before engaging in ministry with children and youth, pursuant to the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A).

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, congregations, and other organizations must keep and maintain all applications and screening records secure and confidential in the diocese, congregation, or the organization office files. This includes a signature by each applicant verifying receipt of a copy of this policy, including any local procedures or variations.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training shall be appropriate to each person's function according to the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A).

All Leaders shall have Safe Church Training that fosters a culture of safety for all people. Safe Church Training is designed to equip all people to live out their Baptismal Covenant. All members of the Episcopal Church in Oklahoma shall have access to this training. Safe Church Training is offered online through Praesidium Academy.

In addition to Safe Church Training, all Supervisors and those with oversight responsibilities for ministry programs and/or other adults who engage in ministry with children and youth may have additional training that is tailored to their role and ministry function.

Depending on role and responsibility, appropriate additional training may include:

- Prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect;
- Vulnerability within the pastoral relationship;
- An introduction to gender sensitivity/LGBTQ+ training;
- The needs of children and youth;
- The ways that children and youth can engage in self-advocacy;
- First Aid, CPR, and other applicable emergency responder training;
- Mental Health First Aid, Suicide and/or crisis intervention training;
- Anti-Racism training;
- The needs of children and youth with different learning needs; and
- The needs of differently-abled children and youth.

Certification of training shall be renewed every three years.

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, congregations, and other organizations with responsibility for programs with services or ministries to children and youth shall keep records sufficient to evidence compliance with this policy.

VI. MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF PROGRAMS

A Responsible Person shall monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, children, and youth to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.

All people who minister to children and youth must have ongoing supervision. Ongoing supervision should consist of regular check-ins by the Supervisor who may be parish clergy or a team leader. Such supervision shall review the scope, accountability, and responsibly of the ministry with the person engaged in the ministry. Each person engaged in such ministry should know who supervises their ministry and how to contact the Supervisor at all times.

The Diocese, congregations, and organizations shall ensure that all people who minister to children and youth receive prior training as to the scope, accountability, and responsibility of the ministry.

The Diocese, congregations, and organizations shall maintain an up-to-date list of persons with their contact information approved to minister to children and youth. This list shall be kept in the organization's office or other place where records are kept.

A. Unrelated Adults Required

There shall be at least two unrelated adults (at least two years older than the eldest participant) present at ministry settings and events designed for children and youth. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, that adult shall report those circumstances to the Supervisor, clergy in charge, senior warden, or Responsible Person as soon as possible.

Only one adult may be sufficient in well-monitored, visually accessible program space on the church grounds, such as a Sunday School classroom, provided that another adult can maintain visual contact with the adult program leader via an open door or window. These exceptional circumstances must be specifically described in a written document and approved by the governing body of the congregation. See also sections on ***Overnight Programs*** (Section VI, I) and ***Transportation*** (Section VI, J).

B. Creating Safe Space for Children and Youth

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact.

For example:

- **Alcoholic beverages**. Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings. Alcohol use by participants and leaders, outside of Eucharist, is prohibited during events with children and youth.
- **Prescription and OTC drugs**. All prescription and OTC medications shall be turned in and use monitored by a person designated with their distribution. They shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.
- **Illegal drugs and marijuana**. The possession or use of illegal drugs and marijuana is prohibited at all youth events, including the use of medical marijuana by leaders and participants.

- **Computers and electronic devices.** Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the Diocese, congregations, and other organizations. Devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password. See ***Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications*** (Appendix B).
- **Persons with keys and access to locked spaces.** *Anyone with keys or electronic access* to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to the ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A).
- **Unused spaces.** Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. Given the vast differences in facilities, each diocese, congregation, and other organization should determine how best to meet this standard.

C. One-to-One Conversations with Children or Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation.

Examples include:

- Planned or unplanned on-site conversations can take place in a public location, away from where others can hear but in view of other adults.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance.

Confidentiality **cannot be guaranteed** if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws.

Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided. See ***Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications*** (Appendix B).

D. Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event.

Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately.

E. Inclusiveness

No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible.

The Episcopal Church seeks to support all children and youth by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.

All children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to maintain their privacy. They should not be required to use a locker room or public restroom space that may present an unsafe environment.

Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).

Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than children and youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on ***Overnight Programs*** (Section VI, I).

F. Violence and Weapons

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific programs with prior approval.
- Report suspected violations immediately. See ***Suspected Violations of this Policy*** (Section VII, B).

G. Behavioral Standards for Adults in Ministry with Children or Youth

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships and behavior that children and youth deserve in all settings, including beyond direct ministry. Interactions should meet all requirements outlined above, and adults should be discouraged from initiating a private relationship with any unrelated child or youth from the church away from sanctioned church activities.

DOs

Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
    - high fives and fist bumps;
    - hand-holding while walking with small children or in prayer;
    - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
    - "laying on of hands" under appropriate pastoral supervision;
    - brief hugs and arms around shoulders; and
- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior.

DON'Ts

Adults responsible for working with children and youth shall not under any circumstances, including beyond the scope of ministry:

- Provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs, cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, marijuana, or misused legal drugs at any children's or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol, illegal drugs, marijuana, or misuse legal drugs at any children's or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event;
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth; or
- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use, or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall take steps as outlined in ***Responding to Concerns*** (Section VII).

H. Special Considerations for Off-Site Programming

Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children and youth. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about application of the policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

Because of the unique risks that can't always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

1. Prior Approvals

- Prior approval by the governing body and the member of the clergy in charge is required, and that approval shall be reflected in the minutes of the governing body. Diocesan sponsored programs, trips, or events shall receive prior diocesan approval.
- Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether off- site or on-site, rated "PG-13" or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, pool parties, progressive dinners, etc.

2. Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms

- All children, youth, and adults shall complete and sign a registration form and a waiver and release form before participating in any programs. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year but should be renewed on an annual basis.
    - There must be a parent/guardian's signature on all release and waiver forms for minors. Please check with your bishop's office concerning whether digital signatures are acceptable in your state.
    - Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online. Please check with your bishop's office concerning whether such forms may be saved electronically and the length of time the forms must be saved.
- Permission slips shall be provided for each off-site event and shall be signed by the parent/guardian.
- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

3. First Aid and Medications

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon exceptions by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

4. Supervision

- At any gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants.
- Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:
    - 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
    - 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
    - 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
    - 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day
- Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy.
- When you have new leaders-in-training, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

5. Insurance

All trips to off-site destinations must have adequate insurance in case of emergency. For more information, contact your insurance broker.

I. Overnight Programs

In overnight programing, particular attention will be given to prioritizing the safety and privacy of all persons. The safety and privacy of all persons merit additional intentional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- Minimization of stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Other guidelines for overnight programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires dioceses, congregations and other organizations to consider numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, disability, medical concerns, and privacy. Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
    - No bed, cot, or sleeping bag shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
    - Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
    - It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water.
- Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

Best practice guidelines for hotel stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hideabeds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered

among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators;

- Adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants;

J. Transportation

- For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed: For events that originate and/or terminate at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's facility, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory DMV records check.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

K. Camps and Retreat Centers

All camps, camping programs, and retreat centers of the diocese shall follow the guidelines for off-site programming established in this policy. In addition, camps should aim to follow American Camp Association standards to the best of the camp's ability.

L. Travel

Travel with children and youth presents amazing opportunities for participants to experience the church and the world on a larger scale with vastly different perspectives of faith communities and their contexts. It also presents challenges to normal safety protocols and opportunities for creativity if managed well. The following policies will help groups prepare for a variety of potential scenarios, as well as for domestic and international travel.

1. Adult Leaders and Chaperones

- Minimum ratios of adult to youth need to be greater due to the possibility of leaving an adult behind with a participant in the event of a medical emergency.
    - 9–14 years — 1:5
    - 15–18 years — 1:7
- Regardless of group size, no group should travel with fewer than three adult chaperones.
- One adult, minimum age 25, should serve as the travel administrator who is responsible for all aspects of the trip, including carrying all necessary documentation, contacts, and forms including:
    - medical releases;

- community covenant;
- emergency contacts;
- itineraries; and
- cash and/or credit card capacity to address emergencies.

- It is a best practice that, one adult, minimum age 25, should hold a current medical certification to manage administration of necessary and permissible medications, administer immediate and necessary first aid, and triage medical situations to determine if care of an individual needs to be taken to a higher level of care. When this is not possible, one person should be designated to supervise the administration of medications as instructed on medical release forms, and a clinic near your destination should be identified ahead of time in order to respond to health emergencies as rapidly as possible.
- Acceptable medical certifications include:
  - Wilderness Medical Response
  - Outdoor Emergency Care
  - Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic
  - Nurse — RN/LPN/Nurse Practitioner
  - Physician's Assistant
  - Medical Doctor
- Best practice is to designate an adult to serve as back-up to the travel administrator, and as back-up for simple first aid and administration of prescriptions. These could be the same person.
- A copy of all documents should be left with an accountable person at the diocesan, congregation, or organization's office. That person should also serve as the local emergency contact person for communications between the traveling group and families at home.

2. Insurance for Travel

- Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through most church and organization's policies as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
- Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.

3. International Considerations

- Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
- Make certain that every traveler's passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
- Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
- Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- A more thorough list of international travel considerations with links to U.S. and global organizations can be found in the ***Youth in Mission Manual*** here: **http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/7-traveling_7.pdf**

VII. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

A. Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation of Children and Youth

Any adult who has reason to believe that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place shall contact the state's Child Protective Services and appropriate law enforcement if immediate safety of a child or youth is in question. For a more detailed guideline for reporting and additional resources please see www.epiok.org/safe-church. (OK B.1 and B.4)

In addition, anyone who has reason to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth has taken place within a facility or program of the diocese, congregation, or other organization, should immediately inform the following:

- *For all cases, including diocesan*: The Bishop's Office, including by email at safechurch@epiok.org;
- *For congregations*: Member of the clergy in charge or the senior warden;
- *For schools, diocesan institutions, and other organizations*: The director, head, or other governing officer; and/or
- *For reporting clergy misconduct*: The Intake Officer in case a member of the clergy is suspected of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation.

B. Suspected Violations of this Policy

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies shall immediately report the violation to the Responsible Person designated at the diocese, congregation, diocesan institution, or other organization.

Clergy regardless of whether they are in charge receiving reports of violations of this policy shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the church. If the Responsible Person is a lay person, they are responsible to ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all.

Anyone who suspects a violation of these policies by a member of the clergy shall immediately report the violation to the Intake Officer(s) appointed by the diocese. Anyone can make a report to an Intake Officer.

The bishop, hearing reports of violations by clergy or by laity at diocesan events, shall be responsible for providing appropriate pastoral care to all those affected and appropriate remedial and/ or disciplinary action, up to and including canonical disciplinary action, as provided by Title IV of the Constitutions and Canons and/or termination of employment or unpaid ministry with the diocese.

C. Local Resources for Response

The Diocese, congregation, or organization shall provide a list of local resources that can give information and assistance to anyone concerned about circumstances that may violate this policy. Such resources with contact information shall include:

- Responsible Person(s) for programs and ministries with children and youth;
- Clergy in charge of a congregation;
- Wardens;
- The Bishop's Office;
- Intake Officer(s); and
- Child Protective Services.

VIII. POLICY ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND AUDIT (Instructions For Dioceses)

A. The Episcopal Church Adoption and Implementation

The Episcopal Church shall ensure that all programs and events of the Episcopal Church involving children and youth comply with the standards set out in this model policy.

The Episcopal Church shall also ensure that each diocese adopts a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** in accordance with this model policy by January 1, 2019.

B. Diocesan Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

The Diocese of Oklahoma shall adopt a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** that is consistent with the requirements of the ***Model Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth***.

The bishop or ecclesiastical authority for the diocese, or the bishop's appointee, shall inform all congregations and organizations within the diocese of the contents of the diocesan policy, the requirement that each congregation or organization adopt a policy in accordance with the diocesan policy, and the vendor(s) approved by each diocese to conduct Public Records Checks.

The Diocese of Oklahoma is required to conduct a ***Safe Church Self-Audit*** every three years to confirm compliance with diocesan safe church policies.

Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):

- Existence of diocesan policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the requirements of the model policy as provided by The Episcopal Church;
- Provision of accessible and appropriate training for all those who work with children and youth in accordance with ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A). Such training shall include, at a minimum, topics identified in this model policy;
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization within the diocese has adopted a policy that is consistent with and/or exceeds the diocesan policy; and
- Verification that each congregation and/or organization has a process to ensure members access training and conduct public record checks.

C. Congregation and Organization Adoption, Implementation, and Audit

Congregations and diocesan organizations must adopt a ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** that is consistent with the diocesan policy.

The Diocese of Oklahoma may allow for site-specific variations from this policy at schools, diocesan institutions, and other diocesan organizations. Such requests must be approved by the local governing body and shall be recorded in the minutes of the governing body. The site-specific variations must then be presented to the Bishop's Office for final approval. Proposed variations shall be described in detail, including the circumstances under which those variations are to be permitted and their rationale. The Bishop's Office retains authority to accept or reject all site-specific variation requests. All site-specific variation requests must be re-submitted every five (5) years.

The ***Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*** shall be posted in a public area where activities take place and shall be provided as part of training to all adults, guardians, and all paid and unpaid persons who minister to children or youth. These policies shall include the names and phone numbers of the member of the clergy in charge, the senior warden, any other Responsible Persons and a contact person in the Bishop's Office.

Each congregation and organization is required to conduct a ***Safe Church Self-Audit*** annually to confirm compliance with safe church policies, and to report such audit to the Bishop's Office by March 1st of each year.

Procedures to be confirmed by audit will include (but are not limited to):

- Public records checks, application forms, records of screening and reference verification of paid and unpaid persons;
- Records of compliance with ***Screening and Training Protocols*** (Appendix A);
- Procedures for responding to concerns and incidents; and
- Evidence of compliance with "safe space" requirements.

Appendix A: Safe Church, Safe Communities
The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma Training and Screening Requirements, Part I

Tier A: All Clergy, all Staff, all persons in the Holy Orders Process, Volunteer Supervisors of Children's/Youth/ Pastoral Ministries, Lay Orders, Spiritual Directors, and all those with fiduciary responsibilities including Bishop's Committees/Vestries/Wardens/Governance Boards:

- Safe Church Training: 10 modules (about 5 hours) in Praesidium Academy + Duty to Report Video module on the Diocesan Website, renewed every 3 years.
- Public Records Checks* are required every 5 years
- Signed Key Holder Agreement (as applicable)

Tier B: All volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults OR have a ministry that involves developing a pastoral relationship (ex: LEVs or EfM Mentors)

- Safe Church Training: 5 modules (about 2.5 hours) in Praesidium Academy + Duty to Report Video module on the Diocesan Website, renewed every 3 years
- A Volunteer Public Records Check* is required every 5 years
- Signed Key Holder Agreement (as applicable)

Tier C: All people with keys/codes to the property

- Safe Church Training: 2 modules (about 30 min) in Praesidium Academy + Duty to Report Video module on the Diocesan Website, renewed every 3 years
- A Volunteer Public Records Check* is required every 5 years
- Signed Key Holder Agreement

Tier D: Contractors, Renters, Outside Organizations, Congregational Volunteers in ministries not contained above:

- Safe Church Training: generally not required
- Public Records Checks: generally not required
- Signed Key Holder Agreement (as applicable)
- *If you have a contractor, renter, or organization using your property that works with children, youth, or vulnerable adults please contact the Diocesan Office for more information about requirements that fit your specific circumstances. Examples include: contract nursery workers, tutoring programs, after-school care, Boy/Girl Scouts, or an eldercare daycare program.*

*The type and scope of a Public Records Check may vary by role and scope of ministry. Safe Church administrators should refer to for specific requirements in Training and Screen Requirements Part II to ensure appropriate level of screening.

Appendix A: Safe Church, Safe Communities The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma Training and Screening Requirements, Part I (Detailed Course List)

Tier A Required Praesidium Courses:
10 modules in Praesidium Academy and 1 module at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma website

- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Introduction & Theological Education
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Organizational Rules & Policies
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Inclusion
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Power and Relationships
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Healthy Boundaries
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Bullying
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Abuse and Neglect
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Pastoral Relationships
- Safeguarding God's People: Preventing Sexual Harassment for Workers OR Preventing Sexual Harassment for Managers and Supervisors. Choose the ONE most applicable to your ministry role.
- Policies: Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma (this module is read-only)
- Duty to Report (at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma website)

Tier B Required Praesidium Courses:
5 modules in Praesidium Academy and 1 module at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma website

- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Introduction & Theological Education
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Healthy Boundaries
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Pastoral Relationships
- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Abuse and Neglect
- Policies: Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma (this module is read-only)
- Duty to Report (at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma)

Tier C Required Praesidium Courses:
2 modules in Praesidium Academy and 1 module at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma website

- Safe Church, Safe Communities: Abuse and Neglect
- Policies: Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma (this module is read-only)
- Duty to Report (at the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma website)

Appendix A: Safe Church, Safe Communities
The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma
Training and Screening Requirements, Part II

Full Public Records Check (Responsibility of the Diocesan Office)

- All clergy
- All employees of the Diocesan Office

Public Records Check (Employee)

- All new non-clergy hires at point of initiation of employment

Public Records Check (Volunteer)

- All volunteers or non-stipendiary ministry roles
- Lay Orders
- Spiritual Directors
- All those with fiduciary responsibilities
- Renewals for non-clergy staff
- All those with keys or access codes to the property

Motor Vehicle

- For any person, volunteer or paid, who drives a vehicle transporting others in the course of their work or ministry
- All persons who drive a vehicle owned by a congregation, school, Diocesan institution, or organization

Credit Check

- All persons who have direct access to bank accounts or other financial accounts
- All those with check signing authority

Appendix A: Safe Church, Safe Communities
The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma
Training and Screening Requirements, Part III

Additional Screening Requirements:

Must have application, documentation of interview, and reference checks on file:

- All clergy (held at Diocesan Office)
- All employees of the Diocesan Office (held at Diocesan Office)
- All new non-clergy hires at point of initiation of employment (held at place of hire)

Suggested interview regarding scope and role of ministry:

- All volunteers or non-stipendiary ministry roles

For Congregations: Suggested 6 month waiting period, if previously unknown in the congregation, before beginning volunteer ministry:

- Volunteers in children's ministry programs
- Volunteers in youth ministry programs
- Volunteers in the nursery
- Volunteers in ministries offering pastoral support or visitations
- Key holders
- To serve in elected positions

Appendix B: Recommended Best Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Children and Youth

Social media shapes the lives of young people and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The following recommended practices and guidelines are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

General Information about Digital Communications

- All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL and can be shared or reposted to others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent; that is, occurring in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
- In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, "friend" can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality, and expectations for relationship.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or youth apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Check your local applicable laws.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Churches and Organizations:

- Establish a policy that outlines professional and institutional standards for profiles and interactions on social networking sites and platforms.
- Establish a policy of transparency regarding social media accounts. The best practice is to have the diocese, congregation, or organization create and "own" the social media accounts representing the diocese, congregation, or organization respectively and have multiple administrators and/or supervisors with access. If personal accounts are used, a system of monitoring should be established.

  Establish a policy regarding the identification or "tagging" of individuals in online photos or videos. For example, on Facebook, "tagging" someone in a photo or video creates a hyperlink to that person's profile page that can be clicked by anyone. The best practice is for the diocese, congregation, or organization not to identify or "tag" individuals. The "tagging" of children and youth should be prohibited. When written permission is provided by a parent/guardian, the captioning of photos or videos of minors may be
  permitted. The caption should not include the minor's full name, nor should it create a clickable link to someone's personal profile. A policy of whether or not an individual can "self-tag" in a diocese, congregation, or organization's online photo or video should also be established.

- A diocese, congregation, or organization does not have a responsibility to review or monitor the personal pages or groups that are not sponsored by that diocese, congregation, or organization, except as described in #2 above. The preceding statement should be included in the diocese, congregation, or organization's Social Media Policy.
- Email can be a good method of communication, and it also has the opportunity to be misunderstood. Having a clear understanding and procedure for responding to digital communication that raises concern is prudent for all. Best practices can include not responding immediately and sharing the communication with a supervisor before responding. Phone and face-to-face meetings are preferred when responding to emotionally driven communications or pastoral emergencies.
- When using photos and videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person and only post images that respect the dignity of every person depicted.
- Dioceses, congregations, or organizations must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space. Signs should be posted that indicate a service or activity will be broadcast when worship services or activities are streamed or distributed on the web or via other broadcast media.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

- Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a child or youth is contacted through social media. Under normal circumstances, refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8:00 am or after 10:00 pm, unless it's an emergency.
- Privacy settings and personal boundaries should be implemented.
    - Create and use profiles on social networking sites that meet professional and institutional standards.
    - Do not submit connection requests (such as friend requests on Facebook or "Add Me" on Snapchat) to children or youth for personal interactions. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be "friends," and

      adults should discern the nature of contact appropriate for healthy ministry.
    - Apply privacy settings that are consistent with all children and youth, across all social networking sites and platforms. Avoid playing favorites or the appearance of playing favorites.
    - Establish a regular ongoing and consistent system of review that focuses on settings, accessible content, photos, and videos to ensure compliance with professional and institutional standards.
    - Inform parents of children and youth of social networking sites and platforms used within the ministry.
    - When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
    - When sending emails to a child or youth that contain personal or private information regarding that child or youth, a copy should be sent to the parents or guardians as well. Examples of these types of emails include: payment due information, specific medical requests or questions, etc. Mass emails sent to an

entire group are not required to be copied to parents or guardians.

- Disclose **ongoing** digital pastoral communications (ie: e-mails, Facebook messages, texting, etc) with children and youth to a parent and/or a supervisor to determine when a referral to a professional provider or resource is needed.

- Create covenants to govern digital groups, which include:
  - Appropriate and inappropriate behavior of members (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, illegal activities, sexual acts, etc.) and the consequence for inappropriate behavior;
  - Who may join and/or view group activity, when participants should leave the group and when/if the group will be disbanded;
  - Description of content that can be posted or published on the site or page;
  - A prohibition of "tagging" photos and videos of children and youth. However, the captioning of photos and videos is permissible with written permission from a parent or guardian;
  - Notification that mandatory reporting laws will be followed; and
  - Consequences for breaking the covenant.
- Delete inappropriate material posted in digital groups, address the behavior and report it, if necessary, in accordance with legal and institutional requirements.
- In video calls, follow the same criteria used in telephone calls. In addition, prudent judgement regarding attire and surroundings should be observed.
- Comply with the following best practices regarding "groups" on social networking sites:
  - Have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators for groups that are designed for youth;
  - Use closed groups, but not "hidden" or "secret" groups, for youth;
  - Have only youth administrators invite other youth to join the online group, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite them to join;
  - Remove any content that shows or describes inappropriate behavior outside the bounds of the established behavioral covenant;
  - Open social networking groups for youth to parents of current members;
  - Remove adult leaders of youth groups and youth who are no longer members, due to departure, removal from position, or are ineligible because they "aged-out" of a program from social networking sites, list serves, etc;
  - Observe mandated reporting laws regarding suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation.